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New York

Chairman: Mr. González . . . . . (Chile)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, as well as Bolivia and Chile, with reference to agenda item 76, "General and complete disarmament".

The re-establishment of democracy in Latin America made it possible to overcome competing visions of security, abandon policies of confrontation and distrust and establish a conceptual framework based on strengthened cooperation, transparency and integration. As support for democratic consolidation grew, our countries' defence and international security policies came to be decided by the freely elected authorities.

MERCOSUR, born as an economic association, has grown in both importance and size. It is today an economic model based on freedom and democracy, in which cooperation is the very essence of the system. Demonstrating the excellent level of relationships achieved in terms of security and defence, we adopted the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace (A/53/297), signed at the MERCOSUR presidential summit held in Ushuaia, Argentina on 24 July 1998.

The document declared MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a zone of peace, free from weapons of mass destruction. It reaffirmed the commitment of the parties to further cooperation in the areas of confidence-building and security-building measures. It also established that mechanisms for consultation and cooperation on matters of security and defence would be strengthened and the growing linkages between them would be promoted.

The six countries decided to support in the relevant international forums the full application and strengthening of instruments and mechanisms for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and to make concerted efforts in those forums to make headway, in the context of a gradual and systematic process, in consolidating international agreements designed to attain the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. This challenge is even more valid today.

The six countries also committed themselves to make progress towards the realization of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a zone free from anti-personnel landmines and to endeavour to extend that zone to the entire hemisphere.

Through the Ushuaia Declaration, MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile reaffirmed their commitment to broaden and systematize the information that they provide to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and to establish a uniform methodology for reporting military expenditure, with a view to increasing transparency and fostering confidence in this domain.

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MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile also agreed to support the work of the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States (OAS), especially as regards the mandate entrusted to it in the Plan of Action of the Second Summit of the Americas.

Finally, the six countries agreed to encourage cooperation between their members with a view to the exclusively peaceful and safe use of nuclear energy and space science and technology.

The Declaration is particularly significant as an example of the establishment of a security scenario based on peaceful cooperation in the Southern Cone. In addition, as reflected in those undertakings, the six countries' participation in international activities is designed to bring about a stable and peaceful world, not only for the sake of our own development, but also for the development of the international community as a whole, because there can be no development without peace and security.

We are therefore proud to highlight the excellent climate of free and democratic cooperation, which makes MERCOSUR a model for the strengthening of international peace and security.

Mr. Nene (South Africa): The international community's primary focus has for many years been the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Appropriate attention has not been given to the scourge of the indiscriminate use of small arms and light weapons. The problems associated with the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons now deserves the international community's full attention. Illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons poses a great danger to peace and stability. The indiscriminate use of these weapons also has a negative impact on the reconstruction and development of many developing countries.

The adoption without a vote of resolution 53/77 T, "Illicit traffic in small arms", emphasized the need for a coordinated approach, including through the United Nations, in preparation for global action to address the problems associated with illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Subsequent consultations by the Secretary-General clearly underlined the importance of regional approaches to dealing with illicit trafficking in small arms in ways most suitable to each region. This was further underlined during the workshops on illicit trafficking in small arms held in Lomé, Togo, and Lima, Peru, respectively arranged by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

On behalf of 74 sponsors, my delegation has pleasure in again introducing a draft resolution on illicit traffic in small arms, which appears in document A/C.1/54/L.44. I wish to extend our appreciation to the large number of delegations which have already co-sponsored the draft resolution, and invite other delegations also to do so. Not only does the number of sponsors indicate the strong support for the objectives of this draft resolution, but it also shows that support is geographically widely based.

I wish to draw attention to the fact that document A/C.1/54/L.44 has, according to the secretariat, been revised for technical reasons. My delegation has requested the secretariat not to make any editorial changes to the text of a draft resolution which has already been approved by its sponsors.

The draft resolution recognizes the value of regional indigenous approaches to the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms, and underlines the importance of increased cooperation and coordination among Member States as well as the relevant intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations. To this end, the Secretary-General is requested to continue his broad-based consultations so as to provide the 2001 United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons with information on the magnitude and scope of the phenomenon of illicit trafficking in small arms. The Secretary-General should also provide information on possible measures to combat illicit trafficking in and circulation of small arms, including those suited to indigenous regional approaches. The conference should also be provided with an assessment of the role of the United Nations in collecting, collating, sharing and disseminating information on illicit trafficking in small arms. The results of these broad-based consultations will provide the necessary authoritative information to assist Member States in taking practical steps to address this problem.

Another important objective of the draft resolution is to recognize the importance of regional initiatives and their collective impact on any international action to address illicit trafficking in small arms. To this end, Member States are encouraged to promote regional and subregional initiatives to address the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, while inviting the Secretary-General and States in a position to do so to assist States taking such initiatives in affected regions. The Secretary-General is invited to use these initiatives as part of his consultations.

The draft resolution furthermore recognizes the impact of surplus small arms and light weapons on the illicit trade in these weapons, and welcomes the practical measures undertaken by Member States to destroy surplus weapons and confiscated or collected weapons, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his reports on small arms. Member States in a position to do so are encouraged to take appropriate national measures to destroy surplus small arms and light weapons, confiscated or collected, and to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to the Secretary-General on types and quantities destroyed.

The draft resolution also invites Member States in a position to do so to provide the necessary assistance, bilaterally, regionally and through multilateral channels, such as the United Nations, in support of the implementation of measures associated with combating illicit trafficking in and circulation of small arms.

It is the belief of the sponsors that this draft resolution, like last year's, can be adopted without a vote.

Ms. Rovirosa (Mexico) *(spoke in Spanish)*: It is an honour for the delegation of Mexico to speak on behalf of the 19 members of the Rio Group on agenda item 76 (m), "Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas".

Nearly three decades have passed since the first nuclear-weapon-free zone was established in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the aim of re-creating the world we once had, in which these weapons did not exist. Later other nuclear-weapon-free zones were established by the Treaties of Raratonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, whose States parties and signatories are committed to the same objective. With the addition of the denuclearized regime established by the Antarctic Treaty, the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas are effectively free of nuclear weapons.

The process begun in 1967 with the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco has not paused. Despite the complacency in some areas of our planet over the deadlock in multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, progress is still being made at the regional level.

The Rio Group enthusiastically welcomes the efforts of the five countries in Central Asia that are trying to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region. We hope that their negotiations will soon meet with success. The immediate consequence will be obvious: a larger area of the earth's surface free of nuclear weapons.

We should also like to express our approval of the agreement reached during the 1999 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, giving Member States of the United Nations guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. Our gratitude goes in particular to the Chairman of the Working Group that considered this item, Ambassador Emilio Izquierdo, who, as representative of Ecuador, one of the States members of the Rio Group, made clear once again our countries' unwavering commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Lasting international peace and security cannot be based on maintaining nuclear forces of military alliances, nor can it be preserved through a precarious balance of deterrence or doctrines of strategic superiority. Genuine, lasting peace can be created only through the effective implementation of the system of security provided for in the United Nations Charter and the realization of general and complete disarmament.

We in the Rio Group are convinced of the importance for peace and international security of draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.34, "Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas". The growing support that our initiative has gained in the past three years bears witness to this.

We hope that those delegations that have in the past expressed some objections to similar draft resolutions will this year be able fully to appreciate the purpose that animates the great majority of sponsors, which is to promote the nuclear-weapon-free status of a considerable part of our planet.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): It gives me great pleasure to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/54/L.14, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific", on behalf of the following sponsors: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific owes its birth to the World Disarmament Campaign launched by the General Assembly at its second special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD II) in 1982, whose principal objective

it is to create an understanding of and public support for the goals of the United Nations in the field of arms limitation and disarmament. In pursuance of these goals, the General Assembly established the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, to be headquartered in Kathmandu, through its resolution 42/39 D of 30 November 1987.

The Regional Centre was considered to be operational upon the signing by the Government of the Kingdom of Nepal and the United Nations of an Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding on 8 June 1988 and the holding of the first regional disarmament meeting in Kathmandu on 30 January 1989. It is under this Agreement and the Memorandum that Nepal's commitment to assisting the United Nations in securing all the necessary facilities for the establishment and functioning of the Regional Centre in Kathmandu is spelt out.

Mr. Sadauskas (Lithuania), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

In view of current developments with regard to the other two Regional Centres, one in Lomé, Togo, and the other in Lima, Peru, which have started functioning with their Directors operating from the respective regions, as well as the 1999 report (A/54/255) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, a separate operative paragraph has been added to the usual draft resolution to reflect the present realities.

This new paragraph requests the Secretary-General to initiate consultations with the host, the Government of the Kingdom of Nepal, as well as with other Member States concerned and interested organizations to assess the possibility of operating the Centre from Kathmandu more effectively.

The draft resolution welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the Regional Centre, in which he mentions the continued relevance of the Centre's mandate and expresses the conviction that the Centre can be a useful instrument for promoting security dialogue in a climate of cooperation in the region.

The draft resolution also contains commendations of the useful activities performed by the Centre in encouraging regional and subregional security dialogue and the promotion of disarmament measures through the organization of seminars and meetings at different locations in the Asia-Pacific region.

In one of its operative paragraphs, the draft resolution would have the General Assembly reaffirm its strong support for the continuation and further strengthening of the Centre and underscore the importance of the Kathmandu Process as a principal tool for enhancing security dialogue both at regional and subregional levels. The draft resolution also expresses appreciation for the continuing political support and financial contributions to the Regional Centre.

Additionally, the draft resolution reiterates its appeal to Member States, particularly those within the Asia-Pacific region, as well as to international governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations, to provide the voluntary contributions so essential for conducting the programme of activities of the Centre.

Last, but not least, the draft resolution contains a request to the Secretary-General to provide all necessary support, within existing resources, to the Regional Centre in carrying out its programme of activities and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on its implementation.

The sponsors earnestly hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, as has been the case in the past. Its adoption without a vote will testify to the fact that the General Assembly continues to support the Centre as a valuable forum for disarmament meetings in order to promote peace, security and confidence-building measures in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.38, entitled "Regional disarmament", on behalf of Bangladesh, Bolivia, Belgium, Egypt, Fiji, Indonesia, Nepal, Niger, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Turkey, Tunisia and my own delegation.

The draft resolution reflects the virtual international consensus in support of regional measures for confidence-building, non-proliferation and disarmament at the regional and subregional levels as essential complements to the global efforts to promote disarmament and international security. In the post-cold-war era, the imperative need for such measures – especially in relation to areas of tension – is self-evident, as major threats to peace and security have proliferated in recent years on account of regional disputes and tensions.

These conflicts often lead to the excessive acquisition and accumulation of armaments, raising the chances of escalation in the scale of the violence and the suffering in ongoing conflicts. The asymmetries in defence capabilities

created by such situations raise the dangers of aggression and the use of force. This could in turn lead to a search for non-conventional means of self-defence and deterrence.

The international community has now fully accepted the proposition that arms control and disarmament measures at the global level must be complemented by measures at the regional level which specially address the particular dynamics of specific regions. Global and regional disarmament must therefore be pursued simultaneously, since both are essential to create the conditions for general and complete disarmament.

The draft resolution affirms these propositions regarding the importance of regional disarmament. It takes into account most of the guidelines for regional disarmament adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993. It also underlines that regional disarmament measures, by enhancing the security of regional States, will contribute to international peace and security by reducing the risk of regional conflicts.

The draft resolution also calls on States to conclude agreements, wherever possible, for nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels. The progress made towards nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace in several parts of the world is a most encouraging sign of the potential of the regional approach to disarmament.

Therefore, the draft resolution welcomes the initiatives that have been taken by some States towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security at the regional and subregional levels, and supports the efforts to promote confidence-building measures as well. Pakistan is confident that the draft resolution will be adopted once again by consensus.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): I wish to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", contained in document A/C.1/54/L.9.

The Government of Japan submitted a draft resolution under this title for the first time in 1994 to prepare favourable ground for the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference by consolidating the commitment of the international community to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. I recall in this context that the idea put forward by that draft resolution found its way into the principles and objectives of 1995. The follow-up draft resolutions since then have enjoyed a better reception than did the first, culminating in support by the five nuclear-weapon States in the past two years.

This year's session of the First Committee stands at a similar juncture to the year 1994, when the first of these draft resolutions was introduced. The First Committee this year can and should play a role conducive to the success of the NPT Review Conference in the same way as it did five years ago, by trying to consolidate the political will of the international community to advance towards the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Let me touch upon the new and most salient points of our draft resolution. We have introduced a few new preambular paragraphs. The fourth paragraph welcomes the international efforts to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, clearly demonstrated at the conference convened this month in Vienna in accordance with article 14 of that Treaty.

The fifth preambular paragraph takes note of the report of the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, as we believe that the timing of the report has generally been acknowledged as opportune, and its contents have broadly been received as useful inputs for the future discussion on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Being aware of some countries' reservations about the content of the report, we have carefully chosen the most neutral term: "Taking note of".

The sixth preambular paragraph expresses the recognition that the enhancement of international peace and security and the promotion of nuclear disarmament mutually complement and strengthen each other. The seventh preambular paragraph underlines the significance of the NPT as the cornerstone of the international regime for nuclear non-proliferation and as an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

These new paragraphs, combined with the old eighth preambular paragraph, provide the conceptual basis for the operative paragraphs which follow them. Operative paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 are the same as those of last year's resolution.

In operative paragraph 4, which outlines several important and necessary measures for making advances towards the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, we have introduced two new elements. One, which appears as the last phrase of subparagraph (b), is a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. The

other is reflected in the last phrase of subparagraph (d), which refers to the continuation of the bilateral nuclear disarmament process between the United States of America and the Russian Federation beyond START III.

Operative paragraph 6 has been extended from last year's paragraph to cover the placement under international control of fissile material in excess of that needed for defence purposes. Such action is important, as it effectively enhances the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament.

Operative paragraph 8 stresses the importance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) model additional protocol, and encourages all States to conclude an additional protocol with the IAEA. The additional protocol greatly increases the effectiveness of the IAEA safeguards and sets a new standard for the nuclear non-proliferation mechanism.

Operative paragraph 9 underlines the importance of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and calls upon all States parties to the Treaty to intensify their efforts with a view to reaching an agreement on a new set of principles and objectives. Beyond all the semantics of "a new agenda" or "a renewed agenda", the single most important point, as I have already emphasized in my general statement, is that the international community stands at a crossroads, and does not have the luxury of allowing the 2000 Review Conference to fail.

It is true that we should not prejudge the outcome of the Conference at this stage, but we can nevertheless let the First Committee play a role in paving the way to its success by urging the 187 States involved to make serious efforts with a view to reaching a forward-looking and solid outcome at the Conference. The caution not to raise expectations is plausible, but how will it be possible to call the Conference a success by agreeing now not to have any hope at all?

Lastly, operative paragraph 10 refers to the constructive role played by civil society in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament is at once the most simple and most complex item on the disarmament agenda: the most simple, because the goal is clearly set as the elimination of nuclear weapons; the most complex, because divergent views exist on the best approach to reach that goal. My Government's approach focuses on creating an agreement on and implementing near- and medium-term concrete and realistic measures. At the same time, we also stress the necessity to identify future measures to take successive steps as quickly as possible. My delegation hopes that this approach can again receive the broad support of Member States this year and provide the international community with a basis for moving forward on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Holm (New Zealand): It is a pleasure to join the other lead sponsors – Mexico, Japan, and Australia – in putting forward the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/54/L.23.

The CTBT is of immense significance for New Zealand. For decades we have been one of the strongest advocates of a comprehensive nuclear test ban as an essential step along the road to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and we worked actively for the conclusion of the Treaty and its adoption in 1996.

Since the adoption and opening for signature of the CTBT, some 156 States have signed and 51 have ratified. New Zealand, for its part, ratified the CTBT in March this year. The large and ever-growing number of States that have signed on to the Treaty is very encouraging; we are especially pleased that the ratification process has accelerated.

But the CTBT is not yet in force. It is essential for the enhancement of international peace and security that a universal and internationally and effectively verifiable nuclear-test-ban treaty should enter into force at the earliest possible date.

The draft resolution is transparent and balanced. It draws from the Declaration issued recently at the Conference in Vienna on the CTBT's entry into force. Its calls are straightforward. Its focus is on the need for all States to sign and ratify the Treaty and for those that have not yet signed to refrain from acts that could defeat its object and purpose in the meanwhile.

For New Zealand, universal adherence to the Treaty has always been crucial. But we believe that countries which have carried out nuclear tests in the past and which have signed but not yet ratified have a particular responsibility to confirm their commitment to the test ban. New Zealand was thus deeply disappointed by the decision of the United States Senate not to proceed to ratification of the Treaty. Ratification by the United States and the two remaining nuclear-weapon States yet to ratify would represent a sign of confidence in the Treaty and would provide a powerful incentive for others to follow suit. We

urge the United States Administration to continue its efforts to ensure that ratification occurs sooner rather than later.

This draft resolution refers to the efforts of the CTBT Organization Preparatory Commission to ensure that the Treaty's verification regime will be capable of meeting the verification requirements at entry into force. This is important. The CTBT will have the most comprehensive verification network ever set up under an international treaty. As well as providing the essential underpinning for the Treaty commitment, it will serve as a verification model to be drawn on as the global disarmament and arms control regime is strengthened through new instruments. I am pleased to confirm that the establishment or upgrading of New Zealand's six monitoring stations is well under way.

We very much hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. We believe it is vital and timely that the international community send an unequivocal signal of support for the CTBT. The draft resolution, which is factual and draws on sources that have found the widest international support, will achieve that goal.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): I should like to offer a few comments on some of the draft resolutions put forward by various delegations and under examination by the Committee this year.

It has been Viet Nam's consistent policy to underline the importance of making contributions to building a world free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In line with this policy, Viet Nam supports the initiatives and measures to promote the elimination of nuclear weapons as well as of other weapons of mass destruction.

While significant progress has yet to be made by the international community, we are still confident that the world community as a whole is forging ahead towards a better and more secure environment. Most noticeably, the end of the cold war and the reduction of tension in the relationships between the nuclear Powers present new opportunities for the United Nations and the world community to formulate effective measures in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Yet mistrust still lingers and reliance on the policy of nuclear deterrence still persists. These are, in our view, the major obstacles preventing us from commencing negotiations to conclude a convention banning nuclear weapons. Disarmament in general – nuclear disarmament in particular – is a complex and difficult process, which calls for innovative initiatives and concerted efforts from both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States. But most important of all is the need for political will and the determination to pursue vigorously the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Viet Nam is a traditional co-sponsor of a number of draft resolutions presented to the Committee this year. We wish to lay particular emphasis on the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/54/L.41, introduced by Myanmar. We think this is the most comprehensive draft resolution on nuclear disarmament, and we therefore strongly support its adoption.

Viet Nam is also a traditional co-sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Follow-up to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*", drafted again this year by Malaysia, as contained in document A/C.1/54/L.43. Our delegation recognizes the common concern that a categorical commitment to the total elimination of nuclear arsenals is yet to be made by the nuclear-weapon States. We wish, therefore, to reiterate the need to uphold the relevance of the Court's decisions.

Furthermore, from the opinion of the Court against the threat and use of nuclear weapons, it is obvious that the nuclear-weapon States must commit themselves to an international legally binding agreement to assure countries that forswear nuclear weapons against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These common concerns about the serious threat of such a horrible type of weapon have been reflected in a draft resolution before the Committee, and our delegation will therefore render its strongest support to that draft resolution, contained in document A/C.1/54/L.36, presented by Pakistan.

In our view, the best way to pursue our ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons is through a convention banning them, as set out in the draft resolution entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons", in document A/C.1/54/L.33, introduced by India. It should be stressed here once again that Viet Nam consistently prefers a forthcoming plan to do away with nuclear weapons under a specified time programme.

At this session of the First Committee, Viet Nam is pleased to co-sponsor two further draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament: the draft resolution entitled "Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas", contained in document A/C.1/54/L.34, presented by Brazil,

and the draft resolution entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", embodied in document A/C.1/54/L.18, presented by Ireland. Viet Nam considers these as very important draft resolutions and fully supports their adoption by the Committee.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) *(spoke in French)*: Speaking for the first time before the Committee at this session, I have the pleasure of conveying to the Chairman the sincere congratulations of the delegation of Mali on his well-deserved election. We are convinced that thanks to his ability the Committee's work will be crowned with success. Our delegation assures him and the other members of the Bureau of our fullest cooperation.

I have the pleasure of speaking today on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Fiji, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Togo and Mali, in order to introduce the draft resolution under agenda item 76(d), "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", which appears in document A/C.1/54/L.25, of 22 October 1999.

The draft resolution results from its authors' will to combat the proliferation of small arms, particularly in the West African region. In this perspective, the draft underscores that the illicit proliferation and circulation of and traffic in small arms constitute an impediment to development and a threat to populations and to national and regional security, and are a factor contributing to the destabilization of States.

The draft indicates that the scope of this phenomenon has led the States of the subregion to take important initiatives - in particular, by adopting a moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, as well as by the implementation of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) through a Plan of Action.

The draft also states that these initiatives were welcomed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at its thirty-fifth session, held in Algiers in July 1999, which has pledged its full support.

In addition, the draft resolution recalls the important measures taken by the United Nations to curb the phenomenon of the proliferation of small arms, particularly by the designation of its Department for Disarmament Affairs as the coordination centre for all United Nations activities concerning small arms.

The draft resolution emphasizes the impact of the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, in particular on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade no later than 2001.

That is the content of the present draft resolution, which in essence reflects the provisions of the resolution adopted last year under the same agenda item. I am convinced that all our colleagues present here share the conviction of the authors of the draft resolution that today we have the opportunity to move forward towards greater cooperation and improved coordination of our overall efforts to curb the phenomenon of the proliferation of small arms and its devastating effects.

In conclusion, I should like to sincerely thank all the co-sponsors for their constant support and to express the wish that, as in the past, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Ado Abou (Niger) *(spoke in French)*: Since I am speaking in the Committee for the first time, I join previous speakers in congratulating the Chairman, both on his well-deserved election and on the excellent way in which he is conducting our work. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

The delegation of Niger would also like to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the quality of the documentation made available to us.

With regard to agenda item 76(d), "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", my delegation agrees fully with the statement made by Mali on behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.25. We would simply like to emphasize the need for collective and individual efforts to be made in the framework of the implementation of resolutions adopted by our Organization in order to stem the phenomenon of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

My delegation would like to mention in this regard that our subregional initiatives are based on the moratorium signed in Abuja in October 1998, for whose implementation the heads of State and Government of the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have asked for the support of the United Nations system. The Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) that resulted from it is the principal instrument to give impetus to and support for national efforts to attain this common objective.

More recently, at the thirty-fifth summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held in Algiers last July, African leaders recognized that the continent cannot on its own deal with the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. They appealed to the international community to support African States in developing and implementing specific programmes to collect and control these weapons.

These subregional and regional initiatives are evidence, if there is any need for it, of the desire to create once and for all a geographical space where security and stability will always characterize the life of States. Nevertheless, this process can only be carried out if the political will of the international community to assist in establishing lasting peace and stability is expressed resolutely and without delay.

At the national level, my delegation would like to emphasize that the Secretary-General's report (A/54/309) on this topic highlighted the fact that Niger, through its National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Arms, has communicated a project for the collection of light weapons and small arms. That document provides information about the Commission, which was established on 28 November 1994, and sets out the background to the problem of the circulation of light weapons in Niger. Funding the initial phase of a five-year programme that the Commission is now finalizing is the major objective.

Nevertheless, although Niger's National Commission was created in 1994, before the United Nations advisory mission was sent to the subregion, efforts to make it operational through technical and financial support from the international community have not yet been followed up. The conclusions drawn by Mr. William Eteki Mboumoua following that mission are, however, enlightening; they confirm that Niger is one of the countries of the subregion most in need of assistance.

The scope and gravity of this phenomenon require that the awareness of populations be heightened without further delay, so that they will give up their arms and so that those which were circulating at the peak of the rebellion may be collected. The peace restored in the north and east of our country following the agreements made in 1995 and 1998 with the leaders of the former armed rebellion should be consolidated. The phase of cantonment, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants currently under way should assist the National Commission for the collection of weapons, which can now count on a climate of harmony and fraternity in order to establish a programme meeting the objectives of disarmament.

In spite of the political changes referred to in the report that I have mentioned, successive Governments have always shown their faith in and constant commitment to the struggle against the small arms trade and against the circulation of small arms. Nevertheless, logistical means will still be required, in addition to a revolving fund to be used to heighten awareness and implement small-scale development projects that can be proposed to disarmed populations as a legal alternative to the use of weapons to ensure the means of survival from day to day or simply for self-defence.

My delegation therefore once again appeals for greater solidarity in this important endeavour and urges the international community to provide States with the necessary assistance. In this connection, my country welcomes certain encouraging initiatives already undertaken, such as those of the Group of Interested States, and hopes to be able to conclude with these partners a programme of activities that will meet the objective of combating the proliferation of small arms.

Ms. Kunadi (India): My delegation wishes to speak as one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.22, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", which was introduced by the Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

We support the statement made by the delegation of Sri Lanka on 26 October in the First Committee. The Conference on Disarmament was unable during its 1999 session to address issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. India was one of the sponsors of resolution 53/76, which reiterated that the Conference on Disarmament had the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate, on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects.

We have witnessed technological developments, including in ballistic missile defences, which could have the effect of opening up new areas of competition, adding to pressures against the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which we believe is an essential element in maintaining

strategic stability. We share the concerns expressed in the final communiqué of the Non-Aligned Movement issued in New York on 23 September regarding the negative implications of these developments and the further erosion of the international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of international security.

India supports the early commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate instrument that would, as a first step, ensure the non-weaponization of space while preserving the use of space, which is the common heritage of mankind, for the full range of peaceful and developmental activities. Draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.22 has been submitted to express the overwhelming sentiment in the international community that the Conference on Disarmament should commence work on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Mr. Oyugi (Kenya): I should like to make a few comments on draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.22, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", of which we are a sponsor.

The draft resolution was introduced, appropriately, by the Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Ambassador Palihakkara. Those of us who have followed the debate at the Conference on Disarmament will recall his valiant efforts in attempting to build a consensus for substantive work on this topic at the Conference. It is regrettable that the Conference was unable substantively to address this matter, as reflected in its report for this year.

The trend of events resulting from advances in space science and technology is quite disturbing. Numerous organizations with an interest in the peaceful uses of outer space have continued to highlight the intentions of some States to militarily dominate outer space. Part of this ambition, we are informed, is known as "Vision for 2020"; the ultimate aim of this programme would appear to be the absolute domination of outer space by denying or severely restricting access to it and use of it by other countries. Such an ambition clearly runs counter to articles III and IV of the Outer Space Treaty. It also puts the survival of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) at risk, as has already been pointed out.

We believe that outer space should be protected from the risk of becoming an arena for an arms race or military confrontation. Since outer space is the common heritage of mankind, no single State should be allowed to dominate it. To this end, a legal regime along the same lines as that of the law of the sea should be elaborated to govern its use. This process could include updating treaties such as the Outer Space Treaty.

In view of the real possibility of an arms race in outer space, appropriate negotiations on an agreement to prevent such a race should begin in the Conference on Disarmament as a matter of priority. This has repeatedly been called for by the Movement of non-aligned countries and by the Group of 21 in Geneva, as it is by this draft resolution.

The Chairman: I urge delegations to introduce the remaining draft resolutions as soon as possible, as we have only one more meeting reserved for this stage of our work.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.